



# VOCABULARY LEARNING STRATEGIES (VLSS) THROUGH SECONDARY STUDENTS AT SAUDI SCHOOL IN MALAYSIA (SSM): A PILOT STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

Actually, the value of English returns to its usage over the entire world rather than the variety of its speakers. In other words, it is international and worldwide in its significance and importance such as, in international field, diplomacy, economy and agreements, global air travel, higher studies, research, peace negotiation, affairs of international cooperation around the world. It is a shared language of individuals throughout the world today. The current study aim to investigate vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) employed by secondary students at Saudi School Malaysia (SSM). Therefore, this study is conducted on cognitive theory of learning studies, the mental processes involved in the learning process. Moreover, this study conducted an analysis of studies dedicated to vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) through secondary students at Saudi school in Malaysia based on previous research problems of models and theories. In addition, this study applied quantitative approach, and the questionnaire was conducted using 58 students. The results of this study revealed the percentage and frequency have further underscored this role and the significance of vocabulary learning in both students and teachers. Also, the results show that students at (SSM) have employed the five categories of VLSs at a medium level and almost at a close range.

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Vocabulary concerns "not only simple words in all their aspects, but also complex and compound words, as well as the meaningful units of language". Specifically, vocabulary is described as "a collection or the total stock of words in a language that are used in particular contexts". Thus, we could say that vocabulary belongs to "a package of sub-sets of words that are used in particular contexts" (Jackson and Amvela, 2007). Therefore, learning how to use strategies (i.e. VLSs) are extremely helpful to cope with these sub-sets of words in different contexts. English is spoken, written, read, understood and widespread in most parts of the world. It's considered as the most common language as Kachru have proposed that "English has actually developed from the native language of a relatively small island nation to the most commonly taught, shown, read and spoken language that the world has ever known" (1985, p. 9 as cited in Kuo, 2006, p.213). Actually, the value of English returns to its usage over the entire world rather than the variety of its speakers. In other words, it is international and worldwide in its significance and importance such as, in international field, diplomacy, economy and agreements, global air travel, higher studies, research, peace negotiation, affairs of international cooperation around the world. It is a shared language of individuals throughout the world today. Besides, for the development of economy, updated and sophisticated technological process, and internationalization (Spolsky, 1998), a very significant role is played by the English language. It is also important for the usage and development of the Internet and The World Wide Web (Pakir, 2000). Also for making English as a second language (ESL) and a foreign language (EFL), it is crucial to have lexical knowledge that has a significant function. Apart from that, language plays an essential function in development and advancement of human society and culture; it's the main means of communication and interaction between individuals, groups and countries. There has been significant development in the political, social, financial and economic sphere of S.A. Since 1925, English has been introduced in schools as a FL by the Ministry of Saudi Education (MSE) for meeting new challenges (Al-Ahayedib, 1986). Soon after, English not only became an important language but a requirement, which made English as one of the core subjects in all levels of Saudi Education. What has been mentioned above is a brief introduction of the significance of English across the world and specifically the status and functions of English in S.A.

## 2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY:

Language comprises four basic skills which are necessary in learning a FL. Normally learners start to comprehend listening and speaking skills, and later they go with reading and writing skills. At the same time, in every skill of language, no one can deal with or communicate without words as Hunt and Belgar, (2005, p.2) state that words are “the heart of language comprehension and use is the lexicon”. In other words, vocabulary is essential and required where it appears in every skill of using a language. Schmitt (2010, p.4) notes that “learners carry around dictionaries and not grammar books”. Besides, Fan, 2003, p.222) states that “vocabulary is the biggest part of meaning of any language and it is the biggest problem for most learners. Therefore, vocabulary learning is the real key to second language learning”. Basically, vocabulary plays a vital part and function in learning a FL as the famous linguist, Wilkins claims that “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed”

(Thornbury, 2002, p.13). Lewis (2000, p.8) also concludes that “the single most important task facing language learners is acquiring a sufficiently large vocabulary”. Simply, vocabulary label objects, actions, and thoughts and so on; students can convey the intended meaning by using words and vice versa, so obtaining adequate vocabulary is essential for them to be skilled and efficient in a FL. Vocabulary and acquiring a FL are related to each other; knowing vocabulary helps to make learners to use the language and using the language enhances vocabulary knowledge (Nation, 1993). Therefore, vocabulary is considered as a vital part of language learning and teaching, so it is great mentioning that vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) should be essential part of vocabulary learning and teaching. Schmitt (1997) has proposed that many learners use more strategies to learn vocabulary especially when compared to some integrated tasks as listening and speaking, but they are mostly inclined to use basic VLSs. This in turn makes VLSs as one of the main parts of enhancing vocabulary in a FL.

### 3. BRIEF HISTORY OF SAUDI ARABIA AND ITS EDUCATION:

Saudi Arabia, the land of the Two Holy Mosques, is a monarchy with a political system rooted in Islamic 'Shari'a' law. Geographically, "it is located on the Arabian Peninsula, and also is the biggest country in the Arabian Gulf. Whilst large in area, the nation is sparsely populated since it is covered by the world's largest sand desert, the Rub al-Khali" (Alqahtani, 2009). Historically, S.A. was a small country without any resources where people were staying in mud houses without any sort of technologies, and life was easy and simple as it was in the past centuries. Later on, after 1950s when the oil was discovered, the life is completely changed in different ways. In other words, a huge improvement includes all country aspects (e.g. social, health, education, transpiration and other fields). About the society, people in S.A. are ethnic Arabs, who share one religion, which is Islam. "The typical Saudi Arab is a proud individual, confident of his/her own values and culture. In addition, he/she is reasonable and relatively unemotional in thought and act" (Abdul-Al, 1997). Besides, the nature of Saudi family is similar a little bit to the neighbouring Gulf and Arab States. For examples, the social relations are indirectly linked to family considerations. Although there are some variations in the family structure as it exists among the nomadic Arabs and cities, but the basic pattern is the same, and the differences are largely of degree. Regarding the history of S.A. Education, the first learning institution was established by the government in 1925. This modest institution, encountering numerous challenges, was the only advanced facility that provided education for a period of ten years. Several public schools emerged in 1936, however, these new schools fully recognized as elementary schools in 1939. At that period, about 2319 learners enrolled for learning in schools in the entire Emirate of S.A. The education demand rose as the country's General Directorate of Education (GDE) grew. The number of elementary learning institutions was 182 in 1949, with an overall enrolment at 21,409 pupils. Although, there was an increase in the number of schools as well as student enrolment between 1930 and early 1950, the illiteracy levels in S.A. remained high (Alromi, 2000). Briefly, the Education in S.A. has undergone several developments as follows:

1. Establishment of Formalized Education System (1926-1953).
2. Oil and Education (1954-1970).

3. Emphasis on Quality of Teacher Education (1971-1984).
4. Debates on the Curricula in S.A. (1985-2000).
5. Post 9/11: Conflicting Discourses in S.A. Educational Paradigm (2001-2003).
6. Education and Embracing Neoliberalism Needs (2001-2010).

### 3.1 Saudi Arabia and the Foreign Languages:

Notably, the first FL to be integrated into Saudi syllabus was Turkish. It was mainly taught in schools that owned and managed by Ottoman. The Arabian Peninsula citizens (Saudis), however, snubbed these schools since the teaching medium was through Turkish language, which they perceived as the tormentor's language- the invaders language (Al- Ghamdi and Al-Saadat, 2002). Thus, after the Ottoman Empire fell in 1914, Turkish language became obsolete.

On the other hand, the absence of confidence coupled with the negative perception of foreign language instruction (e.g. Turkish language) changed because of rapid advancement and progress made by S.A.; to keep in touch with the 20th C. needs, there was a gradual need of developing schools to aid in preparing Saudis to move to Western countries for further studies. Therefore, to achieve this identified need, a 'Scholarship Preparation School' was launched in 1936 in Makkah. The school was specifically meant for Western-bound Saudis, thus students who were remaining at home were not eligible for enrolment (Al-Ghamdi and Al-Saadat, 2002). Furthermore, the school was seen as the main start point for modern high school education within S.A. as well as teaching English as a FL was initially launched at this stage.

With regard to the universal forging languages, English alongside French were incorporated into Saudi secondary education structure as FLs (Al-Abdulkader, 1978). In 1958, teaching of English and French started within the newly launched intermediate level education system (grades 7 to 9). However, the MSE did not include French, during the launch in 1969, thus was only retained in secondary level curriculum (grades 10-12) (Al-Abdulkader, 1978). Since that time, English has acquired a higher stature. English is considered a critical subject in both public and private learning institutions in the country. Nowadays, English is clearly promoted in the educational system as the MSE has stated the major goal of teaching English; the aim of teaching English in the secondary schools is to have the public attain a standard which will permit him/her to make ready use of desired materials in English and which will enable him/her to communicate satisfactorily, according to his/her needs, in both spoken and written forms (MSE, 2002).

### 3.2 Ministry of Saudi Education (MSE):

Due to the importance of education, King Abdulaziz selected one of his sons to be the first Minister of Education, Prince Fahad (later King Fahad) (Al Salloom et al, 1991, p.65). King Fahad actually directed and guided the educational revolution in S.A. From the time that he was appointed to be the Minister, and with his support, the Saudi government started giving more attention to education and learning system. For motivation of students in the entire kingdom to enrol and attend schools, the government decided to offer free education and monthly allowances for learners from impoverished societies. Besides, the government provided learning materials such as exercise books and textbooks, and transport to students. Apart from that, in higher learning institutions, students were offered free accommodation and 250 dollars in monthly allowances. These initiatives have hastened and expanded the achievement of education objectives in S.A. Currently, the Saudi Ministry of Education (MSE) is perceived to be the largest centralized educational body in S.A. Besides, there is separation of girls' learning from their male counterparts in all levels of education. As we know the educational purpose for any group of people or society usually reflects their cultural norms and lifestyle so, the more improved and developed a society, the more the needs of it becomes changeable and the more complex is the country's educational purposes. Similarly, the salient objectives of Education in S.A. come back to its Islamic educational heritage and history because Saudi rules' (politically, socially and economically) are based on the fundamentals of Islam. As one of the salient educational purposes also which is reducing and minimizing the illiteracy of Saudi people. Shortly, the educational objectives are considered as a continuation of the Islamic principles so, the Islamic rules have an impact on the educational system particularly the curriculum of education concepts. Al Salloom (1995, p.9) asserts that "Islam is not only integral to Saudi education but also serves as the very essence of the curriculum".

### 3.3 Education Policy in Saudi Arabia:

Making education more effectual and dependable for fulfilling the country's religious, economic and social requirements and achieving a 100% literacy rate among Saudis are the main objectives of Saudi educational policy. As examples, the Saudi educational policy (1980) specified that Saudi education should focus on such crucial aspects as follows:

1. Strengthen faith in God and Islam, and in Mohammad (Peace be Upon Him) as Prophet and Messenger of God.
2. Foster a holistic, Islamic concept of the universe, man and life, such that the

entire world is subjected to the laws of God in fulfilling its duty without any interruption or confusion.

3. Emphasize that life is a stage of work and production during which the Muslim invests his capacities with a full understanding of and faith in the eternal life in the other world.
4. Proclaim that the message of Mohammad (Peace be Upon Him) ensures happiness to man and rescues humanity from all the corruption.
5. Integrate Islamic orientation in sciences and knowledge in all their forms, items, curricula, writing and teaching so that they would fall in harmony with sound Islamic thinking. (p.6).

### 3.4 Educational Structure and Context of Teaching English in Saudi Arabia:

According to Kachru (2005), there are three concentric circles- the inner circle, the outer circle and the expanding circle upon which the spread of English can be described. The kind of spread, the acquisition patterns and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages are reflected by these circles. Therefore, S.A. is classified under the third circle, or the 'expanding circle', as English is used as EFL and a medium of communication, trade, business, diplomacy, travel, and in higher education. The 'expanding circle' or the third circle is formed of the international communication and education system, where a very significant role is played by English. Particularly, the current study concerns with EFL context, so it is better to have an overview of educational structure in order to help in knowing a brief background about the context of teaching English. The educational structure of S.A. consists of six stages as follows: the preliminary stage (kindergarten), the elementary (primary) stage, the intermediate stage, the secondary stage, the university stage, and the postgraduate study stage. At all stages after kindergarten, education is gender-segregated.

### 3.5 Context of Teaching English:

Due to the significance of English globally and the need of learning and teaching it in S.A., MSE pays more attention to consider it as one of the core subjects in schools. Thus, English is chosen and started to be taught in public schools starting from the fourth-grade of primary stage. Typically, the curriculum of teaching English was arranged by the faculty of English department in the 'Directorate of curriculum' under MSE in which this department is responsible to identify and define the objectives of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL).

Furthermore, the Saudi educational policy has issued such aspects of TEFL; based on the Article No.50, the critical ideas of English teaching and learning are "furnishing the students with at least one of the living languages, in addition to their original language, to enable them to acquire knowledge and sciences from other communities and to participate in the service of Islam and humanity" (Al Hajailan, 2003, p.23). In other words, teachers should show the importance of English to their students as an international language of communication so in turn students could make use of such scientific studies and new technologies and benefit from various cultures.

### 3.6 Saudi Schools Abroad (SSsA):

The idea of establishing Saudi Schools Abroad (SSsA) comes back to some Saudi ambassadors in different countries; they had been suggested to the Saudi government the notion of establishing SSsA. The schools are similar to the schools in S.A. in terms of education system, textbooks, and curriculum where MSE is responsible to supply all SSsA with prescribed curriculum, textbooks, and trained teachers. In 2002 there were 18 such academies and schools at various levels with over 5,000 students and more than 600 teachers under the supervision of the Directorate-General of SSsA, within MSE. Additionally, there are several examples of SSsA across the world; the establishment of the first educational institution was in Washington 1984, the United States of America. Later, the opening of SSsA grew in a number of countries such as in United States, Europe, Austria, Asia and Middle East in which these schools are beyond this system of SSsA. In addition to that, "there is much involvement on the part of the Saudi government in sponsoring Islamic education in a large number of countries, in the West and elsewhere, through special foundations" (Academies abroad cater to educational needs of students, The Saudi Arabian Information Resource (Riyadh, 5th February 2002, p. 1; 'General Education', p.1; 'Educating', p. 6).

#### 3.6.1 Saudi School Malaysia (SSM):

Saudi School Malaysia (SSM) is located in Kuala Lumpur. It was established and formalized in May, 1991 by MSE where it is responsible to supply the school (SSM) and all SSsA with prescribed curriculum, textbooks, and trained teachers. Besides, the study is free and no tuition fees for Saudi students. Materials and subjects in all SSsA are the same to what is taught inside Saudi schools. Apart from that, opening this type of schools (SSsA) plays great and positive aspects since it would motivate Saudis who work or study outside to bring their families, so their children can join these types of schools and find the same curriculum as they were in Saudi. In addition, establishing SSsA could help MSE to achieve its objectives and aims of both teaching and learning process as well as to facilitate procedures for all Saudi high-grade secondary students when they have finished their studying outside and like to join a university or a college. In other words, students outside S.A., who study at one of these SSsA across the world, could easily

join any schools inside S.A. when they come back because they already have followed the same curriculum and grade level of their previous studying at SSsA. Generally, teaching English starts from the first grade of the elementary stage at SSM and then continues in both intermediate and secondary ones. In elementary and intermediate levels, students learn to read and write alphabet letters, numbers and learning new words and grammar rules but for secondary level, students master language skills (read and write for comprehension). Lastly, English curriculum and syllabus are designed gradually; English textbooks are various from one grade to another. For each grade, there are two textbooks; the first one (pupil's book) is divided into units and each unit is divided into language skills and grammar rules and the second one (writing book) is designed for applying the exercises based on the pupil's book.

#### 4. VOCABULARY AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING:

Vocabulary is considered as a vital aspect in language use and a core element in learning and mastering a FL as Rubin and Thompson (1994, p.79) state that, "one cannot speak, understand, read or write a foreign language without knowing a lot of words so, vocabulary learning is at the heart of mastering a foreign language". Besides, in all linguistic skills, vocabulary takes its role in developing a student's language proficiency as Taylor (1992, p.30) points that "vocabulary permeates everything language learners or language teachers do in an English language class, whichever skill or language point is being practiced". In other words, it is prevalent to claim that understanding any language is difficult without knowing words whether in the spoken or the written forms (Hall, 2000; Schmitt, 2000). No doubt, EFL learners with more vocabulary will have no difficult barriers in building up their linguistic skills as Smith (1998) refers that students with large and rich vocabulary are thought to enhance their language skills and also thinking abilities. Therefore, vocabulary is a basic part which should be given much attention in learning and teaching as Meara (1980) suggests that language students accept that they encounter significant difficulties in vocabulary even after upgrading from the preliminary phase of learning L2 to an advanced level. In addition, the findings from Macaro's survey (2003) indicate that L2 instructors consider vocabulary as a subject that requires to be investigated upon to promote teaching as well as learning within classrooms. As we know, it is indisputable that the language skills and grammar rules form an essential part of a FL acquisition, however, vocabulary is more considerable, thus ought to receive much attention. Allen (1999, p.5) observes that within the performing classes, both grammar and vocabulary are given equal attention, however, because vocabulary is critical, thus it ought to be taught prior to grammar. Similarly, Flower (2000, p.5) suggests that, "words are the most important things students must learn. Actually, grammar is important, but vocabulary is much more important. This view is also shared by Lewis (1993, p.115) who considers the vocabulary value as the core of learning and teaching languages because language comprises of 'grammar, non-lexicalized grammar and grammaticalized lexis, as a structure, is second to lexis'. Besides, Harmer (1991, p.153) affirms that "choosing words carefully in certain situations is more important than choosing grammatical structures because language learners cannot use structures correctly if they do not have enough vocabulary knowledge". Another aspect pertains to the significance of vocabulary during communication. For example, Lewis (1993, p.3) considers vocabulary significance as being critical for daily communication. He suggests that when language students do not understand the meanings for key words utilised by the people addressing them, they would not be able to participate in the verbal exchange, even when they understand the morphology as well as syntax. Krashen and Terrell (2000, p.155) suggest that when language students want to seek, express or share information, they need to generate lexical items for conveyance of meaning.

Additionally, Richards' preface within Schmitt's (2000, p.11) "Vocabulary in Language Teaching" shows that vocabulary forms the central part in communication skills and in learning of L2. In addition to that, Richards (1976) affirms that "vocabulary and lexical units are at the heart of learning and communication. No amount of grammatical or other type of linguistic knowledge can be employed in communication or discourse without the mediation of vocabulary". Generally, "no text comprehension is possible, either in one's native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text's vocabulary" (Laufer, 1991, p.275).

#### 4.1 Vocabulary Learning and Teaching:

In acquiring a FL, vocabulary learning and teaching are crucial issues since vocabulary is a part of all linguistic skills. Thus, improving vocabulary will lead to success of a communicative competence. Fan, (2003, p.222) states that "vocabulary is the biggest part of meaning of any language and it is the biggest problem for most learners, so vocabulary learning is the real key to second language learning". Therefore, obtaining adequate vocabulary is essential for students to be skilled and efficient in EFL. By contrast, the lack of vocabulary would lead to such difficulties among students (EFL), so it may impact negatively on their language competence. As a result, vocabulary is the most vital aspect that learners face and struggle in their learning, so the section below will discuss in detail such related issues of vocabulary learning and teaching.

#### 4.2 Vocabulary Learning:

Notably, one of the key objectives for a FL acquisition entails achieving communication skills and vocabulary constitutes a part of each language skill, therefore enhancing vocabulary would result in the achievement of communicative com-

petence amongst learners. Moreover, according to Nation and Gu (2007), it is imperative to differentiate between direct and indirect vocabulary acquisition. According to him, direct vocabulary can be defined as a scenario whereby learners tackle exercises alongside tasks that include word construction exercises as well as vocabulary games that focus on vocabulary. On the other hand, indirect vocabulary implies that the interest of the learner focuses on another characteristic that is usually, the conveyed message. Besides, when the quantity of unknown is continuously minimum in messages, significant vocabulary may be involved, even though the attention of the learner is not completely focused on vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, vocabulary acquisition could be challenging due to many characteristics as mentioned by some scholars (such as Carter & McCarthy, 1988; Nation and Gu, 2007; Laufer, 1991). For instance, Carter and McCarthy (1988, p.13) observe that effective vocabulary learning is expected to be consistent with an instructor's understanding and a learner's perception towards difficulty words, thus because of that the instructor's role ought to be considered. The word difficulty may be caused by certain reasons as well as a large quantity of likely factors coupled with the complex nature for the learning exercise, such reasons have been difficulty to locate. Nation (1990, p.33-50) also examines three separate elements of vocabulary learning that influence a word to be difficult and discouraging to learn. Firstly, the learners' past experiences for English and mother tongue; because an individuals' L1 (first language) influences their L2 (second language) learning, thus borrowing alongside interference between L1 and L2 occurs, for instance, acquiring a word function and meaning may be difficult because there is no accurate matching with the words of a different language.

Secondly, it refers to the manner in which a word is acquired or taught, therefore, this 'unteaching' is rather popular. Seemingly, teaching might produce three outcomes. When the effect is constructive, students proceed to having a better grasp of the language. If the effect is neutral, nothing has been acquired and finally, the effect is negative, learning would have occurred but the concept taught previously and the concept that would be taught in future will be negatively affected (Nation, 1990, p.49). Additionally, Nation (1990, pp.45-47) suggests that the correlation with different words may complicate the process of acquiring new words. He notes that the higher the rate of comparable items, the more they are likely to have a closer connection amongst themselves. For example, words that are closely packed together, including long as well as short, are adjectives and antonyms, with opposite meaning may be cumbersome to learn, particularly when placed together for initial time. This may cause problems because the student can combine or jumble up the meanings for the two words as they have closer association.

#### 4.3 Assessment (Testing Vocabulary):

One of the considerable principles of vocabulary teaching is the 'monitoring and assessment' of vocabulary where in this stage, teachers offer a test for students in order to identify the vocabulary which they need to teach (Nation, 2001). Teachers state their assessment outcomes to students; assessment could be used to help learners reflect on their vocabulary learning, and this also to select what vocabulary will be concentrated on (Nation, 2008). According to Schmitt (2008), vocabulary might be the only aspect of language which learners recognize well enough to be tested on. Besides, Read (1997, p.308) specifies such examples of vocabulary testing as, 'filling in blanks, matching, multiple choice and picture labeling'. Moreover, selecting such items for vocabulary testing relies basically on the testing's objective. For instance, the word choice for course or class accomplishment tests should be from the vocabulary dealt with in the lessons (Schmitt, 2008). He also thinks that the teacher is considered as the best position to know his/her students and which words they should have mastered as well as the sampling of test items is connected to vocabulary testing validity. Pachler, Barnes and Field, (2001, p.204) specified the term validity as "the extent to which an assessment opportunity measures what has been taught and what pupils should have learned". Vocabulary assessment is a salient aspect in testing students' knowledge of vocabulary where the tests' items should be relevant to the activities and tasks have been learned and what teachers have taught through the course. Schmitt, (2008) also adds that when teachers design vocabulary tests, they have to reduce the difficulty of the language skills included in the test items in order not to limit students' capability to show their vocabulary knowledge. More specifically, regarding the production of foreign language words, there are two types of testing vocabulary, as receptive and production testing.

Receptive testing requires an understanding of the recently learned foreign language words while productive testing requires the production of foreign language words. Therefore, memory may perform well in receptive testing with newly created foreign language words but reveal considerably lower recall in productive testing (De Groot and Brink, 2010). However, Mondria and Wiersma's (2004, p.91) research study reveals that after productive learning, productive testing leads to an immediate test are much better instead of those for receptive testing. In addition, about several samples of vocabulary tests (e.g. multiple choice and matching) which are designed for measuring students' knowledge.

#### 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The research design is crucial since the research design is the methodical plan of what data to gather, from whom, how and when to collect the data, and how to analyse the data obtained as Johnson (1977) mentions that the research design explains the purpose of the study, how subjects of the study are to be obtained,



methods to be followed, measurements to be collected and comparisons or other analyses to be made. Moreover, Cohen and Manion (2002) propose that the research design is identified by research objectives and research questions. As for this study, the objectives are concerned with examining VLSs among students at SSM, so the methods are considered essential in investigating the aims and answering the research questions. In other words, the (quantitative-research) investigating VLSs via such instruments will be discussed in detail later on. Particularly, as for this current investigation, the secondary stage at SSM is divided into three levels (1, 2, 3) and the total number of all participants is 58 students.

Based on the above, we can see students have been studied English for six years at least in their previous stages (elementary and intermediate ones). In addition, the subjects constitute a various homogeneous groups; they are mostly Saudi students as well as Arab students who belong to different Arab countries. They are males/females and native speakers of Arabic with no previous experience in learning another language except English. They roughly belong to the same age category (16-18 years old) and come from different social and economic backgrounds due to their various societies which they have been come from. Data collected was analyzed with IBM SPSS, Version 23.

## 6. DATA ANALYSE AND DISCUSSIONS:

The individual demography of participants is discussed in details below:

**Gender:** the total number of the questionnaires (VLSQ) distributed are 70 while 58 is returned and collected by the researcher. As for the gender aspect, the number of males is 26 while the number of females is 32, which they are accounted for 44.8% and 55.2% respectively. Even though the difference is very small, so it indicates that the number of males that participated in the survey is slightly more than females.

**Age:** the age of respondents is categorized into three groups, ranging from 16 years old, with the frequency of (19) students, which accounts for the 32.8% of the total population. The second group belongs to the age of 17 years old and the frequency is (21) students, and it accounts for 36.2 of the total population. The third age group is 18 years old, since its total number is (18) students and it accounts for 31.0% of the total population. Thus, this segment shows that, the highest age group who is participated in the survey (VLSQ) is the age of 17 years old while the least belongs to the age of 18 years old.

**Level of Study:** the participants who are chosen by the researcher belong to the secondary stage at SSM. They are divided into three grades, as the first year to the third year secondary students, and the VLSQ is distributed among all three grades. The first grade belongs to the frequency of (10) students which accounts for the 17.2% of total population. The second grade belongs to the frequency of (11) students and it accounts for 19.0% of total population. The last grade is the third year with the frequency of (37) students and it accounts for 63.8 of total population. As a result, this segment shows that, the highest age group at SSM who is participated in the survey is the third year while the least age group is the first year secondary students. See Table 1.

**Table 1: Participants' Demographic Characteristics (n=58)**

Factors	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Accumulative Percent
Gender				44.8
Male	26	44.8	44.8	100.0
Female	32	55.2	55.2	
Total	58	100.0	100.0	
Age				32.8
16 Years	19	32.8	32.8	69.0
17 Years	21	36.2	36.2	100.0
18 Years	18	31.0	31.0	
Total	58	100.0	100.0	
Level of Study				17.2
1 <sup>st</sup> year	10	17.2	17.2	36.2
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	11	19.0	19.0	100.0
3 <sup>rd</sup> year	37	63.8	63.8	
Total	58	100.0	100.0	

### 6.1 Validity and Reliability:

In the research studies, validity and reliability are salient principles and concepts. Validity describes how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure while reliability is the degree to which an evaluation (assessment) or analysis instrument produces stable and consistent results; for a test to be reliable, it has to be valid. At first, as for the current study, the research methods employed are believed to be valid for achieving the overall aims and specific objectives of the study. Apart from that, Nunnally (1978) claims that since there is no general agreement on what is accepted as an estimate of internal reliability using Cronbach alpha, 0.7 and above is considered a reliable scale. Particularly, all items of VLSQ are tested for their internal reliability in which the scores obtained show a fair internal consistency for the five factors which are the five strategies of learning vocabulary (Discovery, Use, Retrieval, Metacognitive and Storage strategies). The internal consistency details for the three factors are shown in

Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Reliability of Questionnaire Items**

No	The Factor	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Understanding/Discovery Strategy	20	.719
2	Use Strategy	4	.720
3	Retrieval Strategy	3	.758
4	Meta-cognitive Strategy	8	.704
5	Storage Strategy	26	.793
	Total Items	61	.912

This study looked into the differences among respondents in terms of their gender, age, grade, years of study English and language proficiency. It has been revealed that, there was slightly higher number of male respondents (50.5%) than females who were slightly fewer (49.5%) whereas the age of respondents is varied between 16 to 18 years of age which means first, second and third year grades. In addition, the years spent in learning English and language proficiency were also considered by the study since the years were categorised into three groups (0-5, 6-9 and 10 above years) whereas language proficiency was classified into: poor, average, good and very good. The significance of all these to the study is in knowing the distribution of the responses obtained for the study. From the data obtained herein this study, according to the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire (VLSQ), all the five categories of VLSs identified (i.e. Discovery, Vocabulary Use, Retrieval, Metacognitive and Storage), the mean scores for the four categories (exception Storage) are all at medium usage by students at SSM. Particularly, the data reveals that the mean usage of Storage strategy is (M=1.81), Metacognitive (M=2.06), Retrieval (M=2.26), Vocabulary Use (M=2.27) and Discovery (M=2.33). This implies that only the Storage strategy recorded low medium use. Meanwhile, the highest strategy employed by the students is Discovery at (M=2.33). In other words, all the five categories identified, excluding the Storage (M=1.18) which is low use, fall within moderate use. The result goes in line with the literature as Fan (2003) established in his study of VLSs of higher education students in Hong Kong, Liao (2004) in his study of university students in Taiwan, Wei (2007) in his study of Chinese college students as well as other studies.

### 6.2 Age Differences:

This section concerns with investigating the mean differences of 'Age' across all five categories of VLSs. At first, as for the category 'Discovery', there is an overall significant difference among the age groups at p = value level of .001. Equally, for the 'Storage' category, the p value is .006 which shows that, there is a statistical significant difference within the groups. Even, on the angle of 'Retrieval', there is a statistical significant difference between the categories with p value is equal to .019. However, as for the category 'Use', there is no significant difference within the categories with p value of .061. Finally, as for 'Meta-cognitive' category, there is a significance difference within the levels with p=.029. Shortly, this information can be viewed clearly from the Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Showing Age Differences in VLSs Categories**

VLSs Categories	Age	Mean	SD	F-Score	P- Value
Discovery	16	45.5667	7.79338	7.034	.001
	17	47.0811	10.44131		
	18	38.6053	11.94478		
Storage	16	53.5667	14.43340	5.383	.006
	17	58.7838	15.18796		
	18	45.7368	20.97706		
Retrieval	16	6.5000	2.84968	4.122	.019
	17	7.8919	2.77673		
	18	5.9474	3.32027		
Use	16	9.0667	3.91226	2.878	.061
	17	10.1622	3.25332		
	18	8.0000	4.43573		
Metacognitive	16	16.7000	5.20046	3.662	.029
	17	18.1351	5.51846		
	18	14.7105	5.71346		

Particularly, after the five categories of VLSs have been confirmed to be significant except the category of 'Use', the post hoc comparisons analysis is conducted using Tukey test in order to determine which level or group of the independent aspect is really significant. The results have revealed that, the age of 16 is significantly different from age 18 (p = .019) while not significant with the age of 16 and 17 (p = .823). Then, the age of 17 is significantly different with age 18 under the category of 'Discovery'. Concerning 'Storage' category, there is no a significant difference between the age of 16 and 17 (p = .441) and also with the age of 16 and

18 ( $p = .159$ ), but there is a significance difference between the age of 17 and 18 ( $p = .004$ ). As for the category 'Retrieval', there is no significant difference between the age of 16 and 17 ( $p = .148$ ) and age of 16 and 18 ( $P = .732$ ), while there is a significant difference between age 17 and 18 ( $p = .017$ ). Lastly, for 'Metacognitive', there is no significant difference between the age of 16 and 17 ( $p = .540$ ) and the age of 16 and 18 ( $p = .305$ ), but there is a significance difference between the age of 17 and 18 ( $p = .022$ ).

### 6.3 Duration of English Instruction Differences:

Equally, the fourth section concerns with investigating the mean differences of the duration of English instruction (experience) across all five categories of strategies among respondents at SSM. At first, as for 'Discovery' there is no significant difference among the categories (the value of  $p = .714$ ). Equally, as for 'Storage' category, ( $p = .774$ ) which means that, there is no statistical significant difference within the categories. Even, as for 'Retrieval', there is no statistical significant difference between the categories since the value of  $p$  equals to .618. Also, as for 'Use' category, there is no significant difference within the categories ( $p = .909$ ). Lastly, as for 'Meta-cognitive' category, there is no significance difference within the categories ( $p = .459$ ). Shortly, this information can be viewed clearly from the Table 4 below.

**Table 4: Showing Duration of English Instruction among Categories**

VLS Categories	Duration of English instruction	Mean	SD	F-Score	P- Value
Discovery	0-5	43.6800	9.63379	.338	.714
	6-10	44.5366	10.65152		
	+10	42.5128	12.17174		
Storage	0-5	54.8400	15.21425	.256	.774
	6-10	51.7805	15.77421		
	+10	51.9487	21.87398		
Retrieval	0-5	7.2400	3.17910	.483	.618
	6-10	6.8293	2.82756		
	+10	6.4615	3.33913		
Use	0-5	9.1600	4.02782	.096	.909
	6-10	9.2195	3.85040		
	+10	8.8462	4.15197		
Metacognitive	0-5	17.4800	5.04249	.785	.459
	6-10	16.6341	5.11740		
	+10	15.6923	6.49353		

According to Pallant (2007), the post hoc comparison cannot be computed under this analysis since there is none of the factors provide a significant difference result. Based on that, the duration of English instruction among secondary students doesn't have any influence on the categories of VLSs.

### 6.4 English Proficiency Level Differences:

The last salient aspect deals with investigating the mean differences in English proficiency level among respondents across all five categories of VLSs. Based on the VLSQ, the levels of language proficiency are divided into four groups as, very good (V), good (G), average (A), and poor (P). Apart from that, from the descriptive analysis, it is found that the majority of the respondents ( $n=$ ) are those who have a good level (G) of English proficiency (43 students). They are followed by those at the average level (A) of English proficiency (36 students). However, the smallest groups are those belong to the very good (V) and poor (P) levels of English proficiency (7 and 30 students respectively) as can be shown from the Table 5 below.

**Table 5: Descriptive**

Between-Subjects Factors		Value Label	No	Percent
English Proficiency Level	0	Poor	7	12.0%
	1	Average	30	51.7%
	2	Good	12	20.7%
	3	Very good	9	15.5%

At first, as for the category 'Discovery', there is an overall significant difference among the proficiency levels since the value of  $p = .0001$ . As for the 'Storage' category, ( $p = .028$ ) which means, there is a statistical significant difference within the levels of language proficiency. However, as for 'Retrieval', there is no statistical significant difference between the levels since  $p$  value equals to .080. As for the category of 'Use', there is a statistical significant difference within the levels ( $p = .0001$ ). Finally, for 'Metacognitive' category, there is no significance difference within the levels ( $p = .073$ ). Clearly, the information can be viewed from the Table 6 below.

**Table 6: Showing English Proficiency Level Differences In VLSs Categories**

VLSs Categories	English Level	Mean	SD	F-Score	P- Value
Discovery	P	36.6000	13.08653	6.751	.000
	A	42.1111	9.84386		
	G	44.5349	9.77204		
	V	54.1818	7.70478		
Storage	P	46.6667	23.23688	3.159	.028
	A	47.9722	15.44666		
	G	55.8605	17.73963		
	V	62.8182	13.51901		
Retrieval	P	6.0667	3.43234	2.322	.080
	A	6.0278	3.01886		
	G	7.3023	2.81607		
	V	8.2727	3.37908		
Use	P	7.0000	4.50397	6.599	.000
	A	8.1389	3.75806		
	G	9.5814	3.43811		
	V	12.9091	3.11302		
Metacognitive	P	14.1333	7.11002	2.394	.073
	A	16.3333	4.90481		
	G	16.5349	5.38229		
	V	20.0000	5.69210		

The data obtained by this research shows that the mean score of Vocabulary Use strategy at (2.27) which implies a moderate usage among students at SSM. However, there are a number of items identified under this strategy which their mean scores vary following the breaking down of the strategy. The first item is "Using learnt material as much as possible" which registered the highest mean score (2.41) among the three ones. The second one is "Making up sentences in English with learnt words" which scores (2.11) mean score. This item is found to be the least frequently used among the three items under the Vocabulary Use strategy. The third item is "Making up new words to overcome communicative limitations" which has the second highest mean score (2.30) under this sub-item. The last item under the Vocabulary Use strategy is "Resorting to media and technologies to use already learnt words" with (2.24) mean score. The results obtained from the data under this category show that the students have preference in trying to use the newly learned vocabulary more than they do either using the vocabulary in sentences or making up new words or employing media and technologies in using the newly learned word(s). What the data of this current study revealed is consistent with a number of studies among which are Jiménez-Catalán (2003) who found in his study that using a newly learned word in sentences is the most popular strategy employed by students. Similar findings are also made by Liao (2004) and Wei (2007). On her part, Ruutemets (2005) is surprised at the low use of the media, particularly the internet when learning new words by Estonian students.

In a general note, the findings of this study confirm that many secondary students at SSM face one form of difficulty or another at different stages of vocabulary learning. However, despite the difficulties faced by the students, the study found that majority of them involved in this study understand the importance of vocabulary learning albeit much of the vocabulary learning strategies they employ are at a moderate level. In many other studies, the use of dictionary and guessing is found to be more frequently used by students. For example, Gu and Johnson (1996), Schmitt (1997), Kudo (1999), Fan (2003), Jiménez-Catalán (2003), Liao (2004) or Wu (2005) all found in their studies that the use of dictionary is very popular among students with the students opting not to use monolingual dictionaries. Although, the use of dictionary strategy is found in this study as moderately used, its usage is not as postulated by the studies above in the case of this study.

### 7. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK:

The empirical evidence collected for this study allowed the researcher to draw conclusions about various different factors with regard to the VLSs employed by students at SSM and which among these various strategies used more or less by which group of students. Likewise, the frequency at which a particular strategy is employed by the students has also been taken into consideration by this research. The findings revealed that students employ different forms of memory strategies such as pictures, linking the new word with a group of other words which relates to it, therefore consolidating the newly learned word. Likewise, students use verbal and written repetition. Lastly, "Using the Word", the findings explained that many students think that this strategy is very helpful therefore they have been using it in learning new vocabulary. Briefly, this research has generated findings that could be helpful for EFL learners, teachers, as well as curriculum developers and educational policy makers. Although four different types of data were col-

lected in order to add more validity to the results of the study, similar studies are needed to be carried out in other schools' settings that share similar features with SSM. In addition, more English language teachers should be included in the study so as to get more insights from the teachers' perspective in addition to that of the students or their preference in using the strategy of discovery more often than they opt to use other strategies. Moreover, there are certain sections of this research could not provide further information due to the limitation of its scope. Such areas include the reason for the preference of students' utilization of one strategy over another and why the students' tend to employ less a particular strategy. For example, majority of the respondents of this research do not use dictionary when they encounter a new word.

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